

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCOURSE PARTICLES

#### 3.1 Introduction

Learners of Tai languages are often baffled by the seemingly insignificant bits of speech linguists call “particles.” Scattered throughout the flow of a text or conversation, particles add flavor and style to a discourse while often affecting meaning in ways that are somewhat ambiguous. Particles are like the subtle movements which add nuances of meaning to Thai classical dance; a slight movement of the fingers or eyes can communicate a world of meaning of which the uninitiated may be totally unaware.

Particles can be defined in terms of both the characteristics they exhibit and the characteristics they do not exhibit. They do not fit into traditional grammatical classes (noun, verb, adjective, etc.). They occur in the final position of a phrase, clause, or sentence, relating to those larger-than-word units of speech. While mother tongue speakers often have difficulty in explaining their meaning and usage, it is agreed that particles contribute greatly to the well-formedness of a text or conversation.

Often the meaning of a particle is conditioned by the situation in which it finds itself.

As Cooke (1989:33) states:

Sentence particles (many of them at least) have no unified, clearly focused meanings; they are so variable from context to context that they can only be explained by describing the range of contexts in which given sentence particles are used.

Kammuang particles have a twofold nature in that they add meaning to a story and at the same time, derive meaning from the story’s context. For example, the particle *hiă*

can have many nuances of meaning, dependent on the context. In fact, some have widely variant meanings--the particle *kāa* carries two opposite meanings--either obviousness or uncertainty. Additionally, one particle may have many potential alloforms. This could be a great source of confusion for a non-native speaker, yet at the same time, adds color to the story in a very unique way.

In these texts, Mae Laa's particles can be divided into two broad categories--ones that function internal to the discourse and those that function external to the discourse. Particles internal to the discourse include material found in real quotations such as command and question particles, as well as intensifiers. Those which function externally include audience involvement particles and evaluatory or mood particles. These often reflect value judgments, which are indicators of Northern Thai cultural norms.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some specific particles that play an important role in Mae Laa's discourses rather than present an exhaustive list of Northern Thai particles. The meanings of the particles were determined by three methods--comparisons with related languages (Standard Thai, Tai Lue, and the Chiang Mai dialect of Kammuang), interviews with Kammuang speakers, and investigation of the cultural context of the stories. These particles are described in terms of the structure of the overall discourse and Mae Laa's evaluation of certain characters and events.

### **3.2 Particles internal to the discourse**

The first grouping of particles are those which function internal to the discourse--those which are spoken by characters in the story or used by Mae Laa to increase

cohesion of the story's events. These particles do not involve or refer to the audience nor do they express the author's opinions--instead, they are contained within the narration of the discourse. The majority of these particles occur inside quotations which express questions, commands, or answers. Other particles of this type are used to show repetition or intensification of the story's events. The last type is used to mark the boundary of a quote.

### 3.2.1 Particles in quotations

#### 3.2.1.1 Question particles

##### 3.2.1.1.1 *bǎǎ*

There are only a few examples of *bǎǎ* in Mae Laa's stories, and this particle occurs only in recorded speech. This is a common question particle that expresses an invitation to the listener to join the speaker in doing something. In the following example from Mae Laa's description of childhood games, she tells of how she and her friends would invite one another to play *kalóok* which was the name they used for playing "market."

(1) "Games We Played" Line 9

*pǎn hǎǎ wǎa lǎn kalóok bǎǎ ʔia*  
 3rd person call that play kalock [pt: invitation] like this

'They would call out "Do you want to play 'kalock' with us?" (they said it) like that.'

The second example is Mae Laa's invitation to her friend to go eat noodles together. She expounds that her friend Nuansii was a great friend because anytime Mae Laa invited her to eat anything or go anywhere, she would always agree.

(2) “When Tom Was Young” Line 174

*t<sup>h</sup>āa wāa haw kĭn kŭajĭaw bǎǎ*                      *man kò? kĭn*  
 if say we eat noodles [pt: invitation] 3rd pers conn. eat

‘If I said, “Would you like to go eat noodles together?”, she would go with me.’

### 3.2.1.1.2 *hǎa*

The *hǎa* question particle indicates that the person asking the question is very anxious and eager to know the answer. It portrays impatience in the speaker; a strong desire to know the answer right away. The one example of this particle is quite clear, as Ai Muak questions Mae Laa’s father about the date of their upcoming wedding:

(3) “My Life” Line 183

*kamnĭi kò? cá tææŋ müadaj hǎa*  
 and then conn. will marry when [pt: eager question]

‘And then he asked eagerly, “When will we have the wedding, huh?”’

Mae Laa has also chosen to use this particle in her narration because it emphasizes to the audience Ai Muak’s initial devotion and eagerness to marry. This portrayal of Ai Muak’s feelings about their upcoming marriage heightens Mae Laa’s status by stressing that she was eagerly desired as a wife. This particle also adds romance to the story, as the groom eagerly awaits his wedding day.

### 3.2.1.1.3 *kò*

The word *kò* is another question particle which is used only when one does *not* know the answer to the question he or she is asking. According to Purnell (1963:36), when used with a content question word *kò* subtly indicates that the questioner has an ulterior motive in asking, or was not present at the occurrence of the matter in question.

The few instances of this particle all occur in quotations of Mae Laa's suitors, as they are asking her permission to take her to the show, or to visit her at her house. Both of these examples are 'Yes/No' questions, in which Ai Muak and Lang San were not sure what Mae Laa's answer would be. If they used the particle *kaa*, assuming a positive response, Mae Laa could have reacted to their overly confident approach with anger and/or rejection.

(4) "My Life" Line 146

*jàak p<sup>h</sup>òò lí?kee kòò k<sup>h</sup>äj p<sup>h</sup>òò lí?kee kòò ?ii*  
 want watch opera [pt: qn] want watch opera [pt: qn] like this  
*nõ?*  
 [pt: 'isn't that right?']

"Do you want to watch the opera? Do you want to watch the opera?" (he said it) like that, right?"

(5) "Lang San" Line 26

*kamnīi kǎæ kò? wāa wanp<sup>h</sup>uuk wanhuu paj ?ǎæw*  
 and then 3rdpers conn. say tomorrow day after tomorrow go pleasure visit  
*bāan dāj kòò ?ii nǎæ*  
 house able [pt: qn] like this this

'And so then he said, "In the next few days, may I come visit you at your house?" like this.'

Both Ai Muak and Lang San are portrayed as respectable courtiers--as "gentlemen" in their use of the proper question word. Their use of *kòò* portrays an absence of presumption--a humbleness and/or willingness to be rejected. Therefore, Mae Laa is elevated as having the "upper hand" in the courting process, which is the traditional, culturally expected way for Northern Thai young people to court. Typically, a young man is responsible for initiating a courtship, and is quite vulnerable in that he faces the possibility of rejection--of "losing face." The young woman has the "upper

hand” in that she may accept, delay or reject the young man’s advances without any danger of “losing face.”

By using the question particle *kə̀ə*, both Ai Muak and Lang San defer to Mae Laa as the one to decide whether to continue the courtship or not. Mae Laa is given the option to answer negatively and end the relationship at that moment. If these men had used the question word *kaa*, they would have been assuming a positive answer, thus showing disrespect and overconfidence.

#### 3.2.1.1.4 *kaa*

In contrast to *kə̀ə*, the question particle *kaa* is used when the questioner already suspects or knows the answer to the question he or she is asking. The following example is from the story “Lang San,” when Lang San asks Mae Laa if her husband (Ai Muak, who had already divorced Mae Laa and had later been killed) came with her to the monk’s funeral. Mae Laa makes the meaning of this particle explicit as she explains to the audience that Lang San already knew that her first husband was dead, but was just trying to be polite by asking. He was also making sure that Mae Laa was “available” to be courted. Her response to this question was an indicator of her interest in getting to know Lang San better.

(6) “Lang San” Lines 22, 24

*pən kə̀ə tʰāam wāə fæən ba maa kaa*  
 3rdpers conn. ask that spouse neg. come [pt: qn]

*kʰwaam ciŋ pən tʰāa cá hūu wāə mæə pən māaj læəw*  
 nom. true 3rdpers in that case will know that mother(I) to be widow already

*?á? nō?*  
 conn [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘And then he asked, “Did your husband not come with you?” ... To be honest, in that case he knew that I was a widow already, right?’

Mae Laa answered “He didn’t come. I don’t have a husband” and the courtship progressed from then on. This portrayal of Lang San as a gentle, polite suitor sets the stage for Mae Laa’s description of their marriage. Lang San was very ‘good-hearted,’ helpful in work, and devoted to Mae Laa. Mae Laa often commented to us that she was so surprised that he was interested in her in the first place because he was a former school teacher and government official. She was surprised that he chose her since she never was able to attend school, and thus was illiterate. This sheds light on the cultural norms of social prestige, depending largely on wealth, level of education, and occupation.

### 3.2.1.2 Command particles

#### 3.2.1.2.1 *nêə*

The particle *nêə* expresses a command in a polite way. All instances of this particle are in quotations, as Mae Laa increases the vividness of her story by using the informal speaking style of others in natural conversation. It is often used by parents in instructing their children, as shown in the following examples of Mae Cum telling her children about their chores.

(7) “Mae Cum” Line 200

*t<sup>h</sup>ã wan nii löək hoŋhian maa pən cá t<sup>h</sup>ã pən maa kâa*  
if day this finish school come 3rdpers will if 3rdpers come sell

*t<sup>h</sup>uadin p<sup>h</sup>ëc pən cá k<sup>h</sup>iän tí pátuu wâj hũu thawátsaj moo k<sup>h</sup>ãw*  
peanut here 3rdpers will write stick door keep cause Thawatsai grind rice

*nêə*

[pt: polite.com]

‘When they got home from school, if she (Mae Cum) was still selling peanuts here, she would write a note on the door, saying, “Thawatsai--you need to grind the rice.”

The next example is Mae Laa’s opinion about children nowadays, as compared with the past. She precedes this by saying that in the olden days, if parents asked their children not to go somewhere, they would not go. But nowadays, if they say “Please don’t go” their children will just continue to go anyway.

(8) “When Tom Was Young” Line 14

*m paj nêə paj jùu ʔia?*  
not go [pt: polite.com] go continue like that

(If their parents say) “Please don’t go,” they keep going like that!

Another humorous example is the reported speech of one of Mae Laa’s childhood friends playing ‘market.’ This friend, in the role of market seller, is imitating a common phrase that an adult merchant would use. This imitation of adults is typical for children and is humorous in this story because the children were playing with paper money. As Mae Laa says later, “It didn’t matter if it was expensive or not, it wasn’t real money!”

(9) “Games We Played” Line 46

*pən cá nâaŋ wan nii tɔŋ kʰǎj pææŋ nɔɔj nêə*  
3rd person will sit day this must sell expensive little [pt: polite.com]

‘She would sit and say “Today I have to raise the prices a little bit!”’

### 3.2.1.2.2 *tɔʔ*

The polite particle *tɔʔ* serves to soften a command or request. It occurs once again in Mae Laa’s vivid quotes. Both quotes are between family members, and contain advice which is given for the benefit of the hearer. The first one from the story “Mae



Cum” is Mae Laa’s repeated advice to her sister to marry the handsome man that brought her flowers (she did later, after he paid what was then an outrageously high brideprice of 2,000 baht).

Even though Mae Laa is younger than Mae Cum, in this example she is free to use this slight command because she desires the best for her older sister--a handsome and polite husband! In the end, Mae Cum did marry him and he was a good husband and father.

(10) “Mae Cum” Line 49

*t<sup>h</sup>āa pən pīk lææw wāa ʔaw tɔʔ*                      *ʔaw ləj*  
 if 3rdpers return already say take [pt: soft.com] take go ahead  
*pīi ʔaw ləj ʔii náʔ*  
 older sibling take go ahead like this [pt: ‘you know’]

‘If he had already left, (I) would say, “Take him, go ahead and take him, sister, go ahead and take him!” like that, you know.’

The second example of the use of *tɔʔ* is Mae Cum’s advice to Mae Laa to focus completely on selling food, so that she could earn enough money to send her daughter to school. Again, this command to continue selling goods is expressed with positive motivation--so that Mae Laa will be prosperous and able to provide for her daughter. This positive motivation is expressed with the use of *tɔʔ*.

(11) “When Tom Was Young” Line 45

*kamñii mææ cūm wāa ʔeə*                      *k<sup>h</sup>āj tīk tīk*  
 and then mother Cum say exclamation sell continually continually  
*tɔʔ*  
 [pt: soft.com]

‘And so then Mae Cum said, “Oh, you should keep on selling on and on!”’

Mae Laa's respect and admiration for Mae Cum is apparent as she "validates" her work in a sense by expressing Mae Cum's "blessing" of what she is doing. Because Mae Cum said to continue, Mae Laa continued and in the end was successful. In everyday life today, the author observed that any major decision Mae Laa made was in consultation with Mae Cum. This close relationship between elder and younger sister will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.2.3.

### 3.2.1.3 Affirmative answer particle *kàʔ*

The particle *kàʔ* functions to mark an affirmative answer, in response to a question. In the story "When Tom Was Young", Mae Laa describes a typical conversation that she would have with a good friend of hers. She tells about what a good friend Nuansii was because whenever Mae Laa invited her to do something, she was always "game" to do it.

(12) "When Tom Was Young" Lines 100-101

*haw paj k<sup>h</sup>ǎaj k<sup>h</sup>ua bǝǝ pǝǝj*  
 we go sell goods [pt: invitation] celebration

*ʔee paj kǝʔ paj kàʔ*  
 Uh huh go conn. go [pt: aff. answer]

'(I would say) "Do you want to sell food together at the celebration?"'(She would say) "Uh huh, sure I'll go with you."

## 3.2.2 Repetition Particles

### 3.2.2.1 *lǎʔ*

One particle which intensifies through repetition is *lǎʔ*. *lǎʔ* marks similar or related actions, providing cohesion in the story by linking the event with a previous similar event.

One example of this cohesion device is in the description of Mae Cum's first son, referred to as the older brother of her second son, Thawatsai. Several sentences later, Mae Laa mentions the sickness of Mae Cum's husband, referred to as Thawatsai's father. These two unfortunate health-related events are linked both through the repetition of the referent Thawatsai and the use of *lā?*.

(13) "Mae Cum" Lines 73 and 86

Thawatsai's older brother died

*lāj*                    *hḥōŋ thawátsaj nāa*                    *kāa*                    *paj kəət loŋbāan*  
 older brother of    Thawatsai [pt: 'you know'] [pt: obv] go born hospital  
*paj tāj hiǎ*                    *nǎa*  
 go die [pt: neg.feel] [pt: 'you know']

'Thawatsai's older brother, you know, he was born in the hospital and died, you know.'

Thawatsai's father got sick

*lææw pəw*                    *kḥḥōŋ thawátsaj*                    *nii maa pəaj lā?*  
 then father of    Thawatsai    this come sick [pt: rep]

'Then Thawatsai's father got sick as well [in addition to his son dying]!'

Another example of this phenomenon occurs while Mae Cum's husband was sick in the hospital. During that time, Mae Laa cared for Mae Cum's children. After one month, Mae Cum's husband recovered and returned home, only to have a relapse and be sent back to the hospital. During the second hospitalization, Mae Cum's husband's relatives cared for the children. These two similar events are linked by the particle *lā?*.

(14) "Mae Cum" Line 92 and 178

*lææw mææ*                    *cūm kə?*                    *ləəj*                    *kḥḥō*                    *wāa hūu*                    *lāa paj pḥḥō*                    *lá?ḥḥon hūu*  
 then mother Cum conn and so request that cause Laa go watch child give

*c̣im mææ c̣um cá ʔaw ʔān p̣öw pawát nii paj hooŋjaa suandök*  
 please mother Cum will take that father Pawat this go hospital Suandok

*c̣iaŋmaj ʔi næʔ*  
 Chiangmai like this [pt: sign.]

‘Then Mae Cum requested, “Could please go watch my children while I take Pawat here to the Suandok hospital in Chiang Mai?” (she said it) like that.’

*ḳh̄aw looŋbāan ṭʰaj ḳəʔ kamn̄i ḳh̄əw jād pii*  
 enter hospital Thai conn. and.then request cousins older sibling

*n̄əwŋ p̄ən taŋ p̄uun p̄h̄əw l̄əʔ m̄ua p̄ən*  
 younger ones 3rdpers direction over yonder watch [pt: rep] when 3rdpers

*j̄u looŋbāan ṭʰaj n̄a*  
 to be located hospital Thai [pt: ‘you know’]

‘He went to the Thai hospital and so then they requested that the relatives from over there (his side of the family) help care for the children this time [like I had last time] when he was at the hospital, you know.

### 3.2.2.2 *m̄əʔ*

According to Purnell (1963:3), the particle *m̄əʔ* can be translated as the English word ‘already,’ indicating a sense of completion.<sup>12</sup> However, in the majority of examples in Mae Laa’s stories, the particle shows repetition of identical actions or events, with only one example closely related to a sense of completion.

When an action or event has already been explained earlier in the text, Mae Laa remembers that she has already mentioned it, yet repeats it again for emphasis,

<sup>12</sup>Purnell states that this particle in its base form is *ʔəʔ* and the initial glottal stop becomes the final consonant or vowel of the previous word. Indeed, all examples of this particle follow the final consonant /m/, thus one could argue for a base form of *ʔəʔ*. However, the transcriber of these texts always wrote this particle as *m̄əʔ* and explained it as *ʔm̄əʔ* as well. Thus, I have rendered this as *m̄əʔ* to be consistent with the native speaker’s opinion.

acknowledging and highlighting the event with the use of *móʔ*. The following example from “Games We Played” is a repetition of Mae Laa’s earlier explanation (Line 19) that the little girls used bowls from their houses to put the “market food” in as they played.

(15) “Games We Played” Line 27

*kǎlāmaŋ p<sup>h</sup>ĕe lēn ʔaw t<sup>h</sup>ūaj bon bāan maa hææm móʔ*  
 bowl here play take bowl up inside house come again [pt: emphasis]

‘It was a big bowl (of papaya salad) and we’d get bowls from up inside the house and bring them down yet another time.’

In the story “My Life” the completion and intensification aspects of this particle are seen quite clearly as the three deaths in Mae Laa’s family unfold. The first death is communicated in a normal way, the second death is emphasized with the particle *lāʔ* and the third death (Mae Laa’s mother) is portrayed vividly as the “crescendo of sadness” through the use of *móʔ*.

(16) “My Life” Lines 266, 301, and 311

Death #1: Father

*kamnīi pōw tǎaj lǎŋ lææw mót*  
 and then father die after to be finished completely

‘And so then (my) father died and after that (all the merit-making) was finished.’

Death #2: Lang San

*p̄i p<sup>h</sup>ōwsōw sōw phan hāa lôwj sǎam síp sīi luŋ sǎn maa*  
 year Buddhist era two thousand five hundred three ten four uncle San come  
*tǎaj t<sup>h</sup>ææm lāʔ*  
 die additionally [pt: rep]

‘In 2534 Buddhist era, Lung San died too [another one dying!]’

Death #3: Mother

*p̄i s̄am cét mææ ?új maa t̄aj t̄hææm*  
 year three seven mother grandparent come die additionally

*mó?*

[pt: emphasis]

‘In the year 2537, Grandmother died as well [the third one in my family to die!  
So sad!]’

This use of *mó?* indicates the most intense feeling of sadness and exasperation, as Mae Laa mourns the death of these close family members. It is as if she is saying, “Father died, Lang San died, and then my mother died on top of that! Isn’t that terrible?” It is interesting to note that all three examples occur in separate post-peak episodes. These events build on one another and are woven together through the uses of *lã?* and *mó?* resulting in an episodic cycle. Because these two particles express not only repetition of events but the author’s feelings as well, they could be said to function both at sentence level and discourse level.

### 3.2.3 The particle *wāa*

According to Purnell (1963:112), the particle *wāa* means “that’s what he/she/they said” referring to the statement that it follows. This particle is used structurally to clarify that the utterance was stated by someone else. For example, Mae Laa related what Mae Cum told her about her relationship with her husband--that she grew to love him in time.

(17) “Mae Cum” Line 19

*lææw sútt<sup>h</sup>âaj maa hāk wāa*

then in the end come love [pt: ‘that’s what was said’]

‘Later on she grew to love him, that’s what she said.’

### 3.3 Particles internal to the discourse

Particles which function external to the discourse in Mae Laa's stories include audience involvement particles and evaluatory or mood particles. These particles sometimes can reflect value judgments which are indicators of Northern Thai cultural norms.

#### 3.3.1 Audience involvement particles

##### 3.3.1.1 *nǎa*

The most abundantly occurring particle used in Mae Laa's stories is *nǎa* and its two alloforms, *nǎ?* and *nǎ?*<sup>13</sup>. Its function is similar to the Standard Thai particle *naa* (which likewise has several variations in tone, not including the rising tone *nǎa*). Cooke (1989:131) describes the overall 'feeling' of the Standard Thai *naa*, which also holds true for the Northern Thai *nǎa*:

These are utterances in which the speaker states a fact, expresses an opinion, tells about his expectations, provides an explanation, or whatever, and then (by his use of *naa*) conveys his expectation or request for agreement or acquiescence. The net result is a question much like English questions ending with "huh?", "isn't it?", and "right?", "don't you think so?", "okay?", "are you with me?", "did you get what I'm saying?" and so forth. Such utterances are usually relaxed and friendly, with the speaker fully expecting (though not demanding) the response he seeks.

Cooke also states that this particle also evokes a certain feeling of social closeness (1989: 134):

When the *naa* occurs following or bracketed by names, nouns, and pronouns that are used as vocatives...it is used to call the addressee's attention, to render the speaker's message more intimate and personal, or to highlight the speaker's baffled complaint.

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<sup>13</sup> An alloform is a variant form of a word with no apparent conditioning or change in meaning.

In Mae Laa's discourses, *nǎa* not only functions to request audience agreement and social closeness, but it additionally draws attention to clarifications, references to the past, and surprising information. In combination with the words *ʔii* 'this' or *ʔia* 'like this', *nǎa* can mark the conclusion of a quotation.

### 3.3.1.1.1 Clarifications

Mae Laa frequently states a fact once and then backs up to clarify something about that fact for the audience. She consistently employs *nǎa* in these instances, making sure that the audience understands exactly what she is talking about. In the following example, she says that she pounded rice, then clarifies what type of rice it was. She thinks it of interest to the audience--that they did not have commercial rice mills then; instead, they had to pound it by hand:

(18) "My Life" Lines 83, 85

*lææw tʰãa waa lūk maa m̩a cãw nǎa mææ*  
 then if that arise come when morning [pt: 'you know'] mother (I)

*kʰãw nii cá dǎj tǎm kʰãw nǎa*  
 3rdpers here will past pound rice [pt: 'you know']

*pěn kʰãw sǎan n̩i nǎa*  
 to be rice milled this [pt: 'you know']

'Then when we woke up in the mornings you know, I would pound the rice, you know. It was milled rice, you know.'

### 3.3.1.1.2 Past vs. present

When speaking of events and objects of the distant past, Mae Laa frequently utilizes a temporal phrase along with *nǎa*. The underlying assumption of such statements is that the audience, while familiar with contemporary Northern Thai life, does not know what things were like in "the old days:"



(19) “My Life” Lines 74-75

*mǔw kǎæŋ din nân hǎæm sâm sàmǎj kòwŋ nǎa*  
 pot cook clay that additional intensifier age, time before [pt: ‘you know’]

*bòw cǎy mǔw kǎæŋ jàaŋ bàadǎaw nǎa*  
 not use pot cook like, as nowadays [pt: ‘you know’]

‘A clay pot at that, in the olden days, you know. It was not like the cooking pots we use today, you know.’

(20) “My Life” Line 174

*kòwŋ t<sup>h</sup>wɔŋ nǐi bòw mii man nǎa*  
 before gold this not have engage [pt: ‘you know’]

‘In those days we didn’t have gold (to give) for the engagement (brideprice), you know.’

### 3.3.1.1.3 Surprising information

Statements that might shock or astonish the audience are often followed by *nǎa*. The following example shows the repetition, clarification, and surprising information functions of *nǎa* working together to impact the audience in a positive way. Mae Laa wants the listeners to know that she is still on good terms with her first husband’s family. She clarifies this by repeating his name in case he would be mistaken for her second husband Lang San. Then she finishes the sentences with *nǎa* once again to stress that his family are all very good and very nice to her. She uses the particle *nǎa* because the audience may be surprised that she is still in contact with Ai Muak’s family, given the negative circumstances of their divorce.

(21) “My Life” Line 345

*jǎad fii pii nòwŋ tua p<sup>h</sup>ũa kàw*  
 cousins that older siblings younger ones person husband old

*nǎa taŋ ʔǎaj mùak nǎa pǎn kò?*  
 [pt: ‘you know’] side older brother Muak [pt: ‘you know’] 3rdpers conn.

*dii nǎa*  
good [pt: 'you know']

‘[This might surprise you, but] My former husband, you know, Ai Muak’s relatives you know, are such good people, you know.’

This surprising element also can be seen in Mae Laa’s oft-repeated boasts of her memory--something that might not necessarily be expected of an elderly woman who was not permitted to attend school:

(22) “My Life” Line 253

*mǎæ cǎm dǎj mót nǎa*  
mother(I) remember able completely [pt: 'you know']

‘[Even though I am uneducated and older], I can remember everything, you know.’

### 3.3.1.1.4 Quotations

*nǎa* is one of several particles which, when used in conjunction with *ŋi* or *ŋia*, can mark the end of a quotation where the quotation contains clarifications, references to the past, or surprising information. The following example is Ai Muak’s question to Mae Laa’s father clarifying the amount of the brideprice.

(23) “My Life” Line 173

*kamn̄i kò? t<sup>h</sup>ǎam wǎa pǒo cá ʔaw tǎwdaj kǎas̄nsòt*  
and then conn. ask that father will want how much brideprice

*ŋia nǎa*  
like this [pt: 'you know']

‘And so then he asked Father, “How much do you want for the brideprice?” (he said it) like this, you know.’

### 3.3.1.1.5 Summary

Overall, the particle *nǎa* is similar to the English “you know,” which serves to teach or instruct the audience by keeping them involved. *nǎa* is also used to clarify, compare the past with the present, and emphasize surprising information. As Schiffrin (1987:284) expounds on the role of English ‘you know’ in a storytelling:

Y’know enlists the hearer’s participation as an audience to the storytelling by drawing the hearer’s attention to material which is important for his/her understanding of why the story is being told... A narrator has an interactional stake in making a story interesting (to avoid, in Labov’s 1972 terms, ‘the withering response of “so what?”’) By enlisting the hearer as an audience, y’know provides the minimum needed for story appreciation--hearer attention.

### 3.3.1.2 *nǎ?*

According to Purnell (1963:67), *nǎ?* is a reflexive question word like the English phrase “isn’t that right?” Mae Laa consistently pronounces this as *nǎ?* or *nǎ?*, which along with *nǎa* are the two most abundant particles used in Mae Laa’s stories, and share many of the same functions.

#### 3.3.1.2.1 Comparison with *nǎa*

*nǎ?* is similar to *nǎa* as it is used to clarify, to compare the past with the present, and in conjunction with *ʔi*, *ʔa*, and *ʔa* to mark quotations. However, it has a different impact than *nǎa*. Where *nǎa* has a more cajoling or teaching tone, *nǎ?* seems to make a slightly stronger demand for agreement.

Amnuayporn (1996:145) portrays the distinctiveness of *nǎ?* in Tai Lue as “full expectation of the addressee’s agreement, as well as emphasis, topicalizing, or persuading.” For example, the desired response to *nǎ?* would be “That’s right,” or “I agree” whereas for *nǎa*, the desired response would be “Oh, really?” or “Is that so?”

*nǎ?* is used to clarify or compare information that is not new to the audience--information that the author has already mentioned or that she assumes the audience knows already. For this reason, *nǎ?* does not mark surprising information.

### 3.3.1.2.2 Opinions

Because of the author's desire for audience agreement, Mae Laa's opinions are frequently marked by *nǎ?*. When she describes something and fully expects the audience to pay attention and agree, she employs *nǎ?*. This function is shown clearly in the following example from the story "Mae Cum" in which she describes her brother-in-law as very handsome.

(24) "Mae Cum" Line 28

*lǎw cá tǎaj p<sup>h</sup>ǎa pǎn nǎ?*  
handsome will die husband 3rd person [pt: 'isn't that right?']

'Her husband was so so handsome, right [Don't you agree? You've seen his picture]?'

In this case, the audience had seen a picture of Mae Cum's husband earlier and had agreed with Mae Laa that he was a very handsome man. For this reason, Mae Laa uses *nǎ?* as she fully expects the audience to agree again.

### 3.3.1.3 *nǎæ*

Occurring much less frequently than either *nǎa* or *nǎ?*, the Kammuang *nǎæ* and its alloforms *nǎæ?* and *nǎæ?* function in a way that is similar to the Standard Thai *næ* as discussed by Cooke (1989:19):

*næ* signifies particular relevance; signals that some referent or event is especially relevant or worthy of the addressee's attention. It occurs with noun phrases (especially particularized or quantified) and verb phrases dealing with events....

Similarly, Amnuayporn (1996:145) states that in Tai Lue, *næ* calls for the attention of the addressee or topicalizes something. In Kammuang, *nææ* points out or highlights an event as especially significant.

This highlighting function of *nææ* is illustrated quite clearly in the two examples below. The first example highlights how Mae Laa's first husband came to visit her house for the first time. This represents a very significant step in the Northern Thai courtship process.

(25) "My Life" Line 154

*pən kəʔ ləj maa næʔ*  
3rd person conn. and so come [pt: sign.]

'And then he really did come (to visit at my house).'

The second example is significant in a negative way, as it identifies the "other woman" who was the main reason for Mae Laa's divorce from Ai Muak:

(26) "My Life" Line 235

*tii waa mææ ʔũu hũu faŋ wan nân næʔ*  
who that mother(I) talk allow listen day that [pt: sign.]

'The one that I told you about that day, that one (that Ai Muak committed adultery with).'

As in the case of *nǎa* and *nǎʔ*, *nææ* can be used in conjunction with *ʔii* or *ʔia* to signal the end of a quotation. These quotations generally are highly significant in the overall flow of the discourse as they add vividness, mark peak and often reflect cultural expectations. In the first example, Mae Laa gently reprimands Ai Muak for proposing to her directly, rather than going to ask her parents' permission as custom would require.

(27) “My Life” Line 165

*mææ kəʔ ləj waa t<sup>h</sup>aa jàak dǎj c<sup>h</sup>àn kəʔ paj k<sup>h</sup>əʔ káp pəʔ*  
 mother(I) conn. and so say if want get 1pers conn. go request with father

*káp mææ ʔi nǎéʔ*  
 and mother like this [pt: sign.]

‘And so I said, “If you want me you need to go ask my parents” (I said it) like this.’

Later, she refers to her parents’ expectation for life-long care, the traditional duty of a last-born daughter. Her parents use a common phrase to implore Mae Laa to take care of them “until they die; until they enter the earth.” This statement is significant and is thus marked by *nææ*.

(28) “My Life” Lines 259-260

*liəŋ hũ pən təw tǎj təw k<sup>h</sup>aw din mət*  
 care for give 3rdpers until die until enter earth completely

*təw sút ʔi nǎæ*  
 until end like this [pt: sign.]

‘(So that) I would care for them “until they die; until they become dust” completely. “Until the end,” (they said it) like that.’

### 3.3.2 Evaluatory particles

#### 3.3.2.1 *həʔ*

The particle *həʔ* is one of many intriguing Kammuang particles which expresses the feelings of the speaker. *həʔ* is used to express mild surprise--either the author’s feelings of surprise or the perceived surprise of the audience to a particular part of the story. The context, or subject matter may be positive, negative, or neutral in the author’s mind, yet always conveys a feeling of wonder.



### 3.3.2.2 *lɔɔ*

According to Purnell (1963: 52), the particle *lɔɔ* conveys a sense of mild surprise or a slight question. This particle has many alloforms in Mae Laa's stories, including *lɔɔ*, *lɔ̃ɔ*, and *lúu*. While *lɔɔ* is found to function external to the storyline, this particle can also be used as a slight intensifier, emphasizing information that is obvious to the audience.

#### 3.3.2.2.1 Mild surprise

The only example of *lɔɔ* used with mild surprise occurs when Mae Laa tells of men flirting with her these days. She uses this particle to express the surprise that she feels about this and that the audience may feel as well, since she is already an older woman. She elaborates further by saying, "I am already over fifty years old!" "That is so embarrassing!" Her use of this seldom-spoken particle is an example of Mae Laa's skill at highlighting this surprising tidbit of information.

(31) "Lang San" Line 88-91

*kamnī t<sup>h</sup>āá cá ba ʔaw t<sup>h</sup>ǎǎm mɔ́?*  
and then in that case will neg. want additionally [pt: emphasis]

*jùu cá ʔii sabáaj nɔ́?*  
live like this comfortable [pt: 'isn't that right?']

*mii lɔɔ*  
have [pt: surprise]

*mii k<sup>h</sup>on maa cǐip mǎǎ nǎa*  
have people come flirt mother(I) [pt: 'you know']

'And so now in that case I don't want (to get married) again! My life is just fine this way, right? [You're not going to believe this, but] there have been some. There are some men that come to flirt with me, you know.'



### 3.3.2.2.2 Intensifier

In its function as an intensifier, *lɔɔ* brings attention to an obvious point and, in the process, emphasizes the point. Here the alloform *lúu* is used in reference to the activities of the “dirty old man” who stole Mae Laa and her playmates’ clothes. She states that people who do bad things to children are bad because, as everyone knows, children are innocent and easy to take advantage of.

(32) “Games We Played” (embedded narrative “The Bad Man”) Line 123

*láʔɔɔn man ba cây hûu lüaŋ ñǎŋ lúu*  
 child 3rd person neg. right know the matter anything [pt: intensity]

‘Children aren’t really aware of things like that--they are innocent! [everyone knows that, right?]’

### 3.3.2.3 *kãa*

The evaluatory particle *kãa* functions in two seemingly contradictory ways--to express the speaker’s uncertainty and to mark information that the speaker believes is obvious to the listener. This particle is an excellent example of the importance of context to the understanding of meaning.

#### 3.3.2.3.1 Uncertainty

One function of *kãa* in Mae Laa’s stories is to express uncertainty, sometimes with an implied desire for the audience to disagree. One very clear example of the latter use is in “My Life” when Mae Laa tells about contracting smallpox and being covered with boils. She says that the boils made permanent scars on her face resulting in her skin being ugly. She uses the particle *kãa* at the end of this statement to see if the audience will agree or disagree.

(33) “My Life” Line 18

ʔəɔk nāa t<sup>h</sup>ǎŋ bəɔ ɲaam cá ʔii kāa  
 break out face up to not beautiful like this [pt: uncertainty]

‘My face broke out, and so now my skin is not beautiful, do you agree or not?’

The second example does not involve the audience, but simply expresses Mae Laa’s uncertainty about the amount of time her niece lived in Pong City.

(34) “Mae Cum” Line 215

paj jùu muaŋ pǒoŋ dǎj sák ʔii nīa? kāa  
 go live city Poong past part. about year like this [pt: uncertainty]

‘(She) lived in Poong City only about one year, like that. [I think--I’m not sure]’

### 3.3.2.3.2 Obvious Information

The most abundant function of *kāa* in Mae Laa’s stories is its marking of information that Mae Laa believes the audience is or should already be aware of. It has the feeling of “...as you may have guessed” or “...as you already know.” These can relate to characters introduced in the story who the audience knows or events that the audience already knew about or had participated in.

The first example from “My Life” refers to a past conversation the author had with Mae Laa in which she told about the woman who had committed adultery with her first husband, Ai Muak. She indicates that the information is obvious, or already known by the audience by using a combination of the determiner *nân* and the particle *kāa*.

(35) “My Life” Line 234

*tii mii k<sup>h</sup>on nân maa jææŋ nân kãa*  
 which have people that come fight over that one [pt: obv]]

‘(The situation) in which there was that person that fought over (my husband);  
that one, obviously. (that I told you about earlier.)’

The second example is the identification of a character in the story, explicitly stating that the audience had met him before while taking his rice to the mill. Again, *kãa* is combined with the determiner *nãa*.

(36) “Paa Daa and Lung Too” Line 28

*lã? luŋ p<sup>h</sup>át tii haw ?aw k<sup>h</sup>ãw paj sǐi hũu pən nãa kãa*  
 then uncle Phat who we take rice go mill give 3rdpers this [pt: obv]]

‘And Uncle Phat, the one whose rice we took to be milled, this one [who you’ve already met], obviously...’

The third example is information which Mae Laa assumes is obvious to the audience. She states that the afternoon market begins to wane at about four o’clock, which the audience knew already because of having spent every day with her at the market. So with *kãa*, she is acknowledging that the audience knows about the ebb and flow of the market’s customers.

(37) “When Tom Was Young” Line 80

*t<sup>h</sup>ãa kò? sák sǐi moon nǐi kò? ba mii ?á? kãa*  
 if conn. about four hour this conn. neg. have conn. [pt: obv]]

‘By about four or five o’clock, there wasn’t anyone coming (to the market),  
obviously [as you would guess].’

### 3.3.2.4 *wá?*

In Standard Thai, the particle *wá?* carries a “coarse or familiar” tone, which can sometimes indicate negative feelings such as aggression or anger (Cooke 1989: 27).

Similarly, In Mae Laa’s stories, *wáʔ* is used mark Mae Laa’s strong negative feelings toward a specific event or person. In the story about a “dirty old man” who stole Mae Laa and her playmates’ clothing while they were swimming in a stream, *wáʔ* is used repeatedly to show Mae Laa’s contempt for a person who would do something like this to a child:

(38) “Games We Played” (embedded narrative “The Bad Man”) Lines 105, 107, and 113)

*lāʔ pən lák paj mǎæ kʰǎw ʔaw sin pʰāa mǎæ*  
 then 3rdpers steal go mother(I) 3rdpers take sarong cloth mother(I)

*kʰǎw sǝn hiǎ wáʔ*  
 3rdpers hide [pt: neg.feel] [pt: neg.feel]

‘And he stole my sarong and other clothing and hid it! [that terrible man!]

*ʔaw pʰāa tii haw kǎæ pʰaatʰǎŋ wáj bon ʔaw pʰāa*  
 take clothing which we takeoff sarong keep on top of take clothing

*mǎæ kʰǎw paj sǝn wáʔ*  
 mother(I) 3rdpers go hide [pt: neg.feel]

‘He took our clothing, our sarongs that we had taken off and left up there and went to hide them! [it was terrible!]

*wāa ʔii wáʔ*  
 say like this [pt: neg.feel]

‘(He) said (for me to get out of the water and get my clothes) like that [he was such a dirty old man!].’

### 3.4 The particle *hiǎ*

There are some particles which can function either internal or external to the storyline. The functions of these particles can be determined by the context in which the particle

is used. As for Mae Laa's stories, the particle of this type which has been examined in detail is *hiǎ*.<sup>14</sup>

The particle *hiǎ* occurs in all six stories and has a wide variety of meanings depending on the context and how it is combined with other words as *wá?*, *lá?*, and *kɔɔn*. Norman Mundhenk, (1967:125) who has done an extensive study of this particle, postulates six different 'meanings' of *hiǎ*. He claims that *hiǎ* may express a positive command, intensification, negative (or disappointed) attitude of the speaker, unwillingness of the actor to do something, overdone action, and an "even more than that" or "as if that wasn't enough" attitude of the speaker. Though he hesitates to say that *hiǎ* is a 'completive,' (as Purnell and Haas have both interpreted) Mundhenk (1967:125) states that some of his texts contained sentences which could be given a 'completive' interpretation:

There are sentences in the corpus which could be given a 'completive' interpretation. (I must confess, however, that I have a very dim idea of what 'completive' is supposed to mean.) I would doubtless not have analyzed them this way on my own, and this 'meaning' is not included in the following discussion.

I agree with Mundhenk that *hiǎ* cannot be strictly labeled as a 'completive,' yet my data does have some examples with this sense as well, especially in the case of the combination of *hiǎ* + *kɔɔn* 'first'. This particle, alone or combined with *kɔɔn* indicates that the action has been completed before another action begins, such as verb + 'first' or verb + 'beforehand' in English. This is true for the following examples:

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to *kaa* and *hiǎ*, the word *nīi* may be interpreted as a particle in some instances and a determiner 'this' in others. Preliminary investigation reveals that as a particle, *nīi* may be used to introduce new participants and to highlight certain words or amounts. However, the various levels of function would warrant deeper investigation which is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, to be consistent, I have glossed *nīi* as the determiner 'this' in the Interlinear text.

(39) “When Tom Was Young” Line 79

*tüa kəʔ kʲin nǝmsɛn hiǎ kəʔ lææw kǎn paj*  
time conn. eat noodles with sauce [pt: comp] conn. to be finished together go

*ʔáʔ nǎa*  
conn. [pt: ‘you know’]

‘Sometimes we would eat noodles with sauce first, and then we would finish and leave, you know.’

(40) “Games We Played” Line 63

*man pʰɔʔ waa haw dəj sɔm hiǎ kɔn ʔi*  
it because that we past part. practice [pt: comp] before like that

*nɔʔ*  
[pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘(I learned so fast) because I had already practiced beforehand, like that, right?’

In addition to this ‘completive’ (and thus text internal) sense, *hiǎ* functions most clearly and colorfully in Mae Laa’s stories to indicate unceasing or habitual action (text internal) and intensity of positive, neutral, or negative feelings (text external).

### 3.4.1 Unceasing or habitual action

When Mae Laa described activities in her daily life that were habitual--repeated day after day--she often used the particle *hiǎ*. This use is internal to the storyline in that it amplifies the meaning of the verb. The following examples portray Mae Laa’s daily activities as a child (playing) and as an adult (taking her profit to her husband).

(41) “My Life” Line 103

*ʔææw káp püan hiǎ sák sɔŋ ciuamooŋ*  
pleasure visit with friends [pt: unceasingly] about two hours

‘I would play with my friends on and on, about two hours.’

(42) “Mae Cum” Line 172

*tɯŋ wan ʔáʔ ʔaw sataŋ kōn hiǎ*  
 every day conn. take money measure; part [pt: comp]

‘Every day, (I) would take part of the money to them first.’

### 3.4.2 Feeling Intensifier

As Mundhenk (1967:127) stated,

If something has already been said which has a negative feeling, the *hiǎ* suggests ‘and furthermore, as if that wasn’t enough...’ Even in an introduction it still conveys this negative judgment, though finding one English equivalent is not easy.

All of Mundhenk’s examples were from negative contexts, yet in Mae Laa’s stories, the examples are in positive, negative, or neutral situations. Thus I would postulate that *hiǎ* can be used in any context, to intensify the feeling(s) expressed. It adds the tone of “even more than that...” to a positive or negative opinion.

The first example from “Paa Daa and Lung Too” is Mae Laa’s childhood memory of her older friend’s wedding. The friend married a rich man and had a very fancy wedding with a procession. Mae Laa mentions two times that Daa even wore a pink wedding dress, which would be quite glamorous in those days.

(43) “Paa Daa and Lung Too” Line 43

*sàj sūt sīi tʃ<sup>h</sup>omp<sup>h</sup>uu hiǎ nǎa*  
 put on dress color pink [pt: feeling intensifier] [pt: ‘you know’]

‘[Even more than all that], (She) even wore a pink (wedding) dress, you know.’

The second example from “Games We Played” is Mae Laa’s description of a game she and her friends played in the village stream. She describes in detail the game in which they would bury a ball made out of fiber under a rock or under the dirt in the stream,

and one person would have to dive under to find it. She stresses that the one diving even had to open her eyes under the water to look for the buried ball.

(44) “Games We Played” Line 86

*kamnīi k<sup>h</sup>on nân dam loŋ paj sɔʔ tii fɔj tii nân mɯn*  
 and then person that dive descend go look for at wood fiber ball at that open  
*tǎa hiǎ nǎa*  
 eyes [pt: feeling intensifier] [pt: ‘you know’]

‘And so then that person that would dive to look for the ball, they would even keep their eyes open, you know.’

The third example expresses Mae Laa’s feelings of regret at the changes in society which have affected the behavior of children. She mourns the fact that children these days do not respect and obey their parents as they did in the past.

(45) “When Tom Was Young” Line 13

*lææw pɛn láʔɔn sǎmǎj nii m faŋ hiǎ ləj*  
 then to be child time this not listen [pt: feeling intensifier] at all

‘And children these days do not listen to their parents at all! [What a shame!]

The last example expresses the most anger of all the stories. Mae Laa’s anger at the man who stole her clothing is highlighted strongly by the use of the two particles together--*hiǎ* and *wá*. This intensity of feelings indicates a strong value judgment against this man.

(46) “Games We Played (embedded narrative “The Bad Man”) Line 105

*lǎʔ pɔn lák paj mǎæ k<sup>h</sup>ǎw ʔaw sín p<sup>h</sup>ǎa mǎæ k<sup>h</sup>ǎw sɔn*  
 then 3rdpers steal go mother 3rdpers take sarongcloth mother 3rdpers hide  
*hiǎ wá*  
 [pt: feeling intensifier] [pt: neg.feel]

‘And [that terrible dirty old man] stole my sarong and other clothing and hid it! [isn’t that awful?]



### 3.4.3 Additional uses of *hiă*

The most puzzling use of *hiă* in Mae Laa's texts is in "Games We Played." Mae Laa uses this particle repeatedly as she describes her group of friends giving each other "hair permanents" and then hurrying to "destroy the evidence" by washing the curls out in the stream. This is all done on the sly because the hair styling equipment was stolen from her sister, and she was afraid that if the adults saw their curls, she and her friends would be in "hot water" (literally, the adults would *dùat* 'boil'--get angry).

(47) "Games We Played" Lines 66,67, and 69

*lææw t<sup>h</sup>ãa k<sup>h</sup>äm maa kò? paa kăn paj sá? hiă*  
 then if evenings come conn. go together together go wash [pt: comp]

*man kò? hăaj paj hiă*  
 it conn. lost go [pt: comp]

*kũa pöo mææ maa dâa*  
 fear father mother come scold

'And then when evening came, we would go together to wash our hair. The permanent would all wash out.... We were afraid our parents would scold us.'

This example does not fit any of the descriptions of *hiă* mentioned above, yet seems closest to the 'completive' function. Mae Laa could be stressing the fact that they washed all the curls out or be stating that they washed their hair first thing, so that the adults wouldn't get upset. She may even be stressing the delight felt in being naughty and not getting caught. This example remains a mystery to me, yet symbolizes the colorful intricacy of this particle.

This use of *hiă* is reduplicated almost exactly in the case of the children washing the dishes they had taken to play market, so that the adults would not get mad at them if they found out.

(48) “Games We Played” Lines 56-57

*lææw kò? k<sup>h</sup>ácăj láaŋ wâj hiă*  
 then conn. hurry wash keep [pt: comp]

*kũa k<sup>h</sup>on t<sup>h</sup>ãw maa dũat*  
 fear people old come get angry

‘And then we would hurry and wash the dishes. We were afraid the adults would get angry.’

This case exemplifies what Mundhenk (1967:129) states very frankly about *hiă* : “The point is that in some cases, there does remain uncertainty in the analysis of this word.” In summary, the particle *hiă* would merit further investigation as it seems to function in a colorful variety of ways depending on the context.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Kammuang particles, despite their intricate functions and sometimes ambiguous meanings, add vividness and a sense of balance to Mae Laa’s stories. They can be seen as functioning internal to the discourse, affecting the actual structural content of the texts. Particles also occupy space which is technically external to the discourse, often manifesting Mae Laa’s attitudes toward events and participants. In this sense, particles can provide a bridge between linguistic structure and culturally-based value judgments.